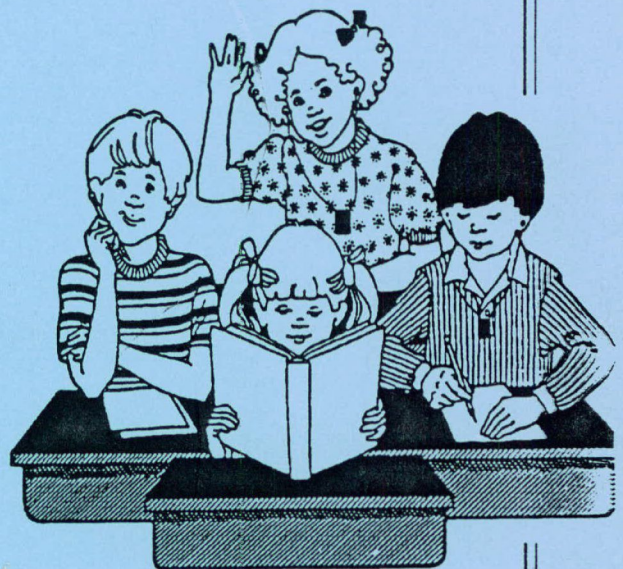


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An Educational Unit on Deafness for Hearing Students

A Resource Produced
by the
Alberta School for the Deaf



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Alberta School for the Deaf
Alberta Education Response Centre
6240 - 113 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
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Dear Teacher:

Enclosed are educational materials for a unit on deafness.
The educational unit covers:

1. An Introduction to the Deaf.
2. Famous Deaf Canadians.
3. Pre/Post Test - True or False.
4. The Manual Alphabet.

When you have finished the unit and should you wish, a staff member of the Alberta School for the Deaf will be available as a guest lecturer. For further information please contact:

Special Projects Coordinator
Alberta School for the Deaf
6240 - 113 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 3L2
Phone: 422-0244

Dear Teacher:

The following suggestions are made only to offer you guidance for teaching this unit. You are free to use the materials in any way you wish.

1. Ask your students to write a few sentences on what they think a deaf student would be like. It would be interesting to do that same assignment after they have completed the unit. We would be very interested should you be willing to share this information with us.
2. The section on "An Introduction To The Deaf" can be used in several ways:
 - a. copied and given to your students for independent study followed by a discussion period.
 - b. used as a basis for you to develop your own lecture and discussion group.
 - c. simplified for use with younger students.
3. The section on "Famous Deaf Canadians" is the only section that might be considered optional.
4. The Pre/Post Test can be used exactly as that or as a post test only. This test would not be suitable for younger students and you would want to develop your own.
5. The manual alphabet can be copied and handed out to all your students.

Finally, please have some fun with these materials. Your covering this unit will be greatly appreciated by our students should you ever plan to visit our school.

C. Magill
Special Projects Coordinator
Alberta School for the Deaf

*A Sign Language Course put together by our elementary students at the Alberta School for the Deaf is available on videotape. Should you wish a copy of this video, please send us a blank VHS video tape. This service is free.

AN INTRODUCTION TO DEAFNESS

We understand you are interested in learning more about the deaf and so we want to introduce you to deafness and to help you understand that deaf children are just like you. They like school (most of the time). They play all the sports. They are happy sometimes and sad other times. The only real difference is in the way they talk to each other.

Types of Hearing Loss

First, let's talk about deafness. Like hearing children, deaf children have their own personalities and talents. Some find school hard, some find school easier than others. It is important to know that not all deaf children have the same amount of hearing loss. We usually put hearing loss into categories:

- ◆ Mild - you don't hear perfectly but you can still hear speech. A hearing aid could make you hear almost normally.
- ◆ Moderate - you can still hear speech but your own speech might start to sound different. Hearing aids are very helpful to people with this hearing loss.

(We usually refer to people with the above two kinds of hearing loss as hard of hearing, not deaf.)

- ◆ Severe - this hearing loss is very serious and learning speech becomes much more difficult. Depending upon the amount of hearing loss in this category, a hearing aid might boost your hearing into the speech range. (More likely than not, sign language would be your preferred method of communication).
- ◆ Profound - with this hearing loss, learning speech is extremely difficult and very few deaf people will master it. Sign language would be a necessity in this category. At the lower end of this category you would be unable to hear anything.

(Most of the students in our school fall into the severe to profound categories which is why we use sign language when we teach. People who have a severe to profound hearing loss are considered deaf.)

Causes of Deafness

Now, let's talk about how people become deaf. You may have a grandfather or grandmother who has a hearing loss. The reason for this is because as we get older, we lose some of our hearing. Some people lose more than others. Other ways people lose their hearing is through noise pollution. Men and women who work where there is loud machinery every day may suffer hearing loss. Another way you could cause a hearing loss would be if you accidentally pierce your ear drum, which is why you should never put anything in your ear.

Our audiologist (the person who tests our students' hearing) says you should not put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear.

Some people lose their hearing after birth. An illness accompanied by a very high fever can cause hearing loss. If they lose their hearing after they have learned to speak, we say they are **post-lingually deaf**. Most deaf people have been born deaf. Some of our students have deaf parents or have other family members who have a hearing loss. These people are deaf through heredity, which means it is passed on from parent to child. This does not mean it is contagious like a cold or the flu.

Other children are born deaf because their mothers may have become ill before the baby was born. In the past, if a mother was exposed to German measles in the first three months of pregnancy, her baby might be born deaf. Now, women who wish to become mothers can go to the doctor and get an injection with something special in it, so that she will not get sick. This is called immunization. Sometimes, if babies do not get enough oxygen at birth, they can suffer a hearing loss. Children who go deaf before they learn to speak are said to be **pre-lingually deaf**.

Misconceptions and Clarifications

Now, let's discuss some of the incorrect ideas that some hearing people have about deafness.

Many people believe that sign language is universal and that deaf people from all over the world can communicate easily and fluently with one another. Unfortunately, that is not true. Like hearing people, deaf people from other countries have different languages. Deaf people have had to develop sign languages independently of other deaf people from other countries, so they could communicate with the people closest to them.

Indeed, within countries, there can be different languages. For example even a little country like Switzerland has three official languages: French, German and Italian. In large countries like Canada or in the United States there can be differences in signs within the country. For example, in eastern Canada, Nova Scotia signs can be different from those in western Canada. Deaf people can still communicate well but they need to understand the signs that are different, just as a hearing person from Nova Scotia has a different regional English from a hearing person in Alberta. In Canada, deaf people from Quebec have a different sign language than deaf people from the English speaking provinces. The language used by most deaf people in the United States and Canada is American Sign Language or Ameslan. Presently, a group of Canadian deaf people are working on a Canadian Sign Language dictionary.

Many people believe that American Sign Language is a “short-cut” language and is not a real language like English or French. This is not true. American Sign Language is as real a language as others. It just has a different syntax (structure). For example, in English we put the adjective “black” before the noun “cat” so we say “the black cat.” In French, the adjective “black” (noir) comes after the noun “cat” (chat) so they say “le chat noir” or “the cat black.” It is the syntax that is different. The information that is communicated is like the information shared between English-speaking people.

What is different between American Sign Language and English is the amount of facial expression used to help in the communication. All languages use some facial expressions, but sign language is really expressive. Some hearing people think that deaf people look a little strange when they are communicating. The more you get to know a deaf person, however, the more you will understand how important the facial expression is in their language. Also, as each hearing person has his/her own voice sound and way of speaking, each deaf person has his/her own personal signing style.

You will also notice that when deaf people are signing they point a lot. This is not impolite. The pronoun “you” is signed by pointing at the person you are talking to. The sign “me” is made by pointing at yourself. “They” is made by sweeping the index (pointing) finger at more than one person. Objects may also be pointed at for better communication.

There are some gestures in American Sign Language. For example, the word for “food” or “eat” is made by putting the finger tips of one hand to the mouth. The sign for milk looks like someone milking a cow. These words lend themselves to natural gestures. However, most words do not and a symbol sign has been created. Most signs are symbols, much the same as spoken words are symbols for objects or concepts (ideas).

Some people think that fingerspelling is a sign language. It is not. Fingerspelling is used by the deaf when they do not have a sign for that word or concept (idea). To use fingerspelling, the deaf person must know how to spell the word in English. For example, if you are introduced to a deaf person, they would not have a sign for your name. You could fingerspell it:

LESLIE

When the deaf person got to know you better, he or she would give you a name sign, maybe a "L" on the forehead for Leslie, so they would not need to spell your name each time they used it. Fingerspelling is only an aid to sign language. The Deaf are very patient when hearing people try to communicate through fingerspelling, but to fingerspell everything you are trying to say can become very boring after awhile. Try sounding out each letter in every word when you are trying to communicate with a friend and you will soon understand what we mean.

The terms "deaf-mute" or "deaf and dumb" should no longer be used when speaking about the Deaf. There are very few deaf-mutes. In more than 30 years, we have never had a deaf-mute person at the Alberta School for the Deaf. "Mute" means no voice. Deaf people have voices as you will soon realize when you hear a deaf person laugh or cry. The reason some deaf people do not use their voice is because speech is very difficult to learn when you can't hear how it sounds. Deaf people know that hearing people find their voices sound strange and hard to understand. Now, if you know that your voice sounds funny, but most important, that it will not help you to be understood any better, would you use your voice? Think about it.

The words "deaf and dumb" should not be used together. In Biblical times, the word "dumb" meant "an inability to speak," but today the word dumb means stupid. By now you know the deaf are not stupid. So, we have dropped the word. Our students are only deaf. You would be surprised how many older people still call it the "deaf and dumb" school. It's really embarrassing. Did you know that in the past some deaf children were considered mentally handicapped and were put into special places for the mentally handicapped? This was very sad.

Many hearing people assume that deaf people are automatically good lipreaders and that they can be taught to lipread easily. This is another incorrect idea (there are many wrong ideas about the deaf, aren't there?) Lipreading seems to be a skill that some people have more of than others. We call this an aptitude. For example, your friend might be better in swimming than you, but maybe you are better in volleyball. These are individual differences that exist with the deaf as well as the hearing.

Another thing that affects a person's ability to lipread is the amount of hearing they have. Remember that all deaf people do not have the same amount of hearing loss. The less your hearing loss, the easier it will be to learn to speak, right? Also, the more you speak, the more you will understand what sounds look like on the lips and the better you will be able to lipread. Imagine if you had never heard English spoken and, therefore, had not learned to speak, how would you know what was happening when another person moved his lips?

Many English sounds look similar on the lips and each person speaks differently. Think of the way you make the sound "b" and "m." They look the same on the lips. Now think if you were to read a "b" instead of an "m." "How is your mat?" could be read "How is your bat?" Problem, right?

In spite of all of these problems, some deaf people are good lipreaders. Some are truly amazing, but even good lipreaders admit that about 50% of what is said is missed. For the average deaf person 60% to 70% of what is said is a blur! They must rely on sign language or writing for communication.

At our school we try to improve our students lipreading skills by using special techniques. However, we know for most of our students sign language is the best way to help them learn. One thing you as a hearing person can do to help someone who benefits from lipreading, is to speak normally and clearly. Some hearing people can look very funny to a deaf person when they try to exaggerate their lip movement. So, if you do not want a deaf person to think you are a little weird, speak normally. If you want to get a deaf persons' attention, you only need to touch them.

The most difficult task a deaf student has is to learn to read and write English. Maybe now that you are beginning to get to know a little about deaf people, you can understand how difficult it must be for them to learn a language they can not hear. Some of you learned English when you were very little because you heard your family speak it. Some of you learned another language first, then learned English by listening to others speaking English. Now, think if you could not hear. How would you imitate the sounds to learn to speak? First we learn to speak English, then we learn to read and write it. If you have never learned to speak it, how would you learn to read and write it?

When you started school at about five or six years old, you already knew a language. If you were born in Canada, you would most likely have learned to speak English or French. If you were born in another country you might have learned a language different than English or French. Some children are very lucky to know more than one language when they start school. Some deaf children start school with no language because some parents did not learn to use sign language with their children when they were young. Maybe the parents hoped the children would learn to speak.

This means that a deaf student must learn to use language before she/he can learn to read or write. Now remember, this is different from an immigrant student who starts school not knowing English, because he or she has learned a language and can hear to learn another. It is easier to learn another language if you know one already. For a deaf student with no language, learning to sign comes first, then learning to read and write English. This is a long, hard job and we would be wrong to expect them to develop English skills as fast or as easily as hearing students.

One of the most exciting moments for the staff at the Alberta School for the Deaf is when a new student with no sign language skills, comes to school for the first time and sees the other deaf children communicating with each other through signing. They get very excited and they watch everything, because they realize that for the first time they are not alone, that there is a way they can learn to communicate. After a few days they will be using their first signs. It is like a parent hearing a child speak his/her first words. Remember, there are some deaf children who will have sign language skills when they start school. These will be the children who have deaf parents, hearing parents who have learned to sign or children who have attended a total communication pre-school.

What do deaf persons do after they graduate from high school? Many deaf students continue their education at community colleges or technical schools where they train to get a job. Some students will go to Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. That's in the United States and is a university for the Deaf. Others will go to work. The Deaf have a very good reputation as workers. There are now deaf teachers, dentists, lawyers and each year more and more professions are entered by the Deaf.

The most frustrating thing for many deaf people is that they are underemployed. This means they are working in jobs that they feel are not up to their ability level. Because many hearing people do not understand about deafness, they are afraid and will not offer them better employment opportunities.

Most hearing people do not realize that the Deaf have their own culture and social classes. Deaf culture has grown based on American Sign Language and involves drama, poetry, painting and all the visual art forms. As well, like hearing societies, the Deaf have different social classes. There are the professionals, trades people, farmers and laborers, all of whom live at different socio-economic levels.

The Alberta School For The Deaf

Now, let's talk about the Alberta School for the Deaf. Before 1955, deaf children were sent to other provinces to go to school. Some Alberta deaf students went as far as Montreal, Quebec, to attend school. They would be away from home for a long time. Parents missed their children, so the Alberta Government decided to build a school for the deaf in Edmonton. They chose Edmonton because it was in the middle of the province. So in 1955, the Alberta School for the Deaf opened its doors to deaf children. It was a big, beautiful, new school and the children were very excited. Not all of the children lived in Edmonton, so the Alberta School for the Deaf was a residential school. This meant that some of the children lived in the school until weekends or holidays. At first, the students lived in dormitories that were like big bedrooms and were part of the school building. The children ate their meals in a big dining room. Today, students live in houses near the school. You can see these houses when you drive into the main entrance. These houses are more like a real home and the students have the same responsibilities as you probably have at home.

At first our school's approach to teaching deaf children was called "the oral method." The idea was that all deaf children should learn to speak like hearing children. The children were not allowed to use sign language. But we will share a little secret with you, the children all used sign language to talk to each other when no one was looking. We now realize that this was not the best way to teach deaf children. In 1968, we became what is called a "Total Communication School." This means that we use sign language, speech, gestures, drama or any method we can to help our students understand. Now, everyone is much happier.

Our school follows the same program as your school. The deaf students must study language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health and physical education. More recently, our students have started to learn about computers. In our junior high and senior high school we also have industrial arts programs. We have a home economics room, a printing shop, photography room, a metals shop and a woodworking shop. We have a very beautiful big gymnasium. Our students can go all the way through school in one building from elementary, to junior high, to senior high school. This means that some of our students are very old friends. Sign language has helped these friendships grow, just as being able to talk helps your friendships grow.

Well by now you have learned many things about the deaf and you probably know more than most hearing adults. This means you can help other people to understand about deafness and help stop some of the wrong ideas some people have. This is one of the reasons that education is important because it helps us help others. If you would like to have someone from the Alberta School for the Deaf come out to speak to your class, ask your teacher. He or she knows who to contact.

FAMOUS DEAF CANADIANS

Between 1884 and 1896, Elizabeth Groom, a deaf evangelist, brought over 25 deaf immigrants and their families from England to the Canadian North-West (Manitoba) for the purpose of forming a colony of deaf people.

The first born deaf Canadian to receive a Ph.D degree from the University of Toronto was Donald J. Kidd. He was awarded the degree on the 8th of June, 1951.

When he was 48 years old, Douglas Rivette of Vancouver, B.C. became the first deaf person ever to swim successfully across the Strait of Georgia (the twenty-nine mile Nanaimo-Vancouver route) on August 13, 1958. He later tried again at 70 years of age in July 1980.

Mr. A. H. Abell, a graduate of the Halifax Institution was the first deaf person to establish the "New Brunswick Deaf and Dumb Institution" in Saint John on November 1, 1873. He is believed to be the first deaf person to become principal of a Canadian school for the deaf.

Chester Orr, a graduate of the Manitoba School for the Deaf, was known as the "Boxing Golden Boy of 1945." He is believed to be the first deaf champion fighter to win the 1945 Golden Gloves.

The Beaver Hockey team of Montreal is believed to be the first and only all deaf amateur hockey team ever to win the championship of the Spalding League in 1913.

Eddit Payne of Windsor, Ontario and graduate of the Ontario School For The Deaf at Belleville became the first licensed deaf male pilot in the world on June 15, 1931.

Jo-Anne Robinson, a deaf Albertan who is now teaching at the Alberta School for the Deaf, was the first deaf athlete to receive four gold medals at the Summer World Games for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. in 1965.

Christine Spink of Alberta was the first Miss Deaf Canada in the year of 1973 and she now lives in Winnipeg.

Joe McLaughlin of Alberta became the first deaf principal in this century at the Alberta School for the Deaf in 1988.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE DEAF?

A TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ

Circle either T for true or F for false.

Example: Deaf children are just as smart as hearing children.

☒ T ☐ F

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Many hearing people are afraid of the deaf because they do not understand them. | T F |
| 2. It is okay to call a person "deaf and dumb." | T F |
| 3. In rare cases, deaf children have been called mentally retarded. | T F |
| 4. Deaf people are mute (have no voice). | T F |
| 5. All deaf people can lipread. | T F |
| 6. With proper training, a deaf person can learn to lipread easily. | T F |
| 7. Most deaf people develop speech that hearing people can understand. | T F |
| 8. The best way to get a deaf person's attention is to touch them. | T F |
| 9. Sign language is the same all over the world. | T F |
| 10. American Sign Language is not a real language. | T F |
| 11. Fingerspelling is a sign language. | T F |
| 12. Facial expression is an important part of American Sign Language. | T F |
| 13. Each person has his or her own signing style. | T F |
| 14. Sign language is used in all schools for the deaf. | T F |
| 15. Deaf people should be able to read and write English as well as hearing people. | T F |
| 16. The deaf have their own culture and social classes. | T F |
| 17. Most deaf people are unable to work because of their handicap. | T F |
| 18. Deaf people can be lawyers. | T F |
| 19. There is no university for the deaf anywhere in the world. | T F |
| 20. Deaf people can use telephones. | T F |

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE DEAF?

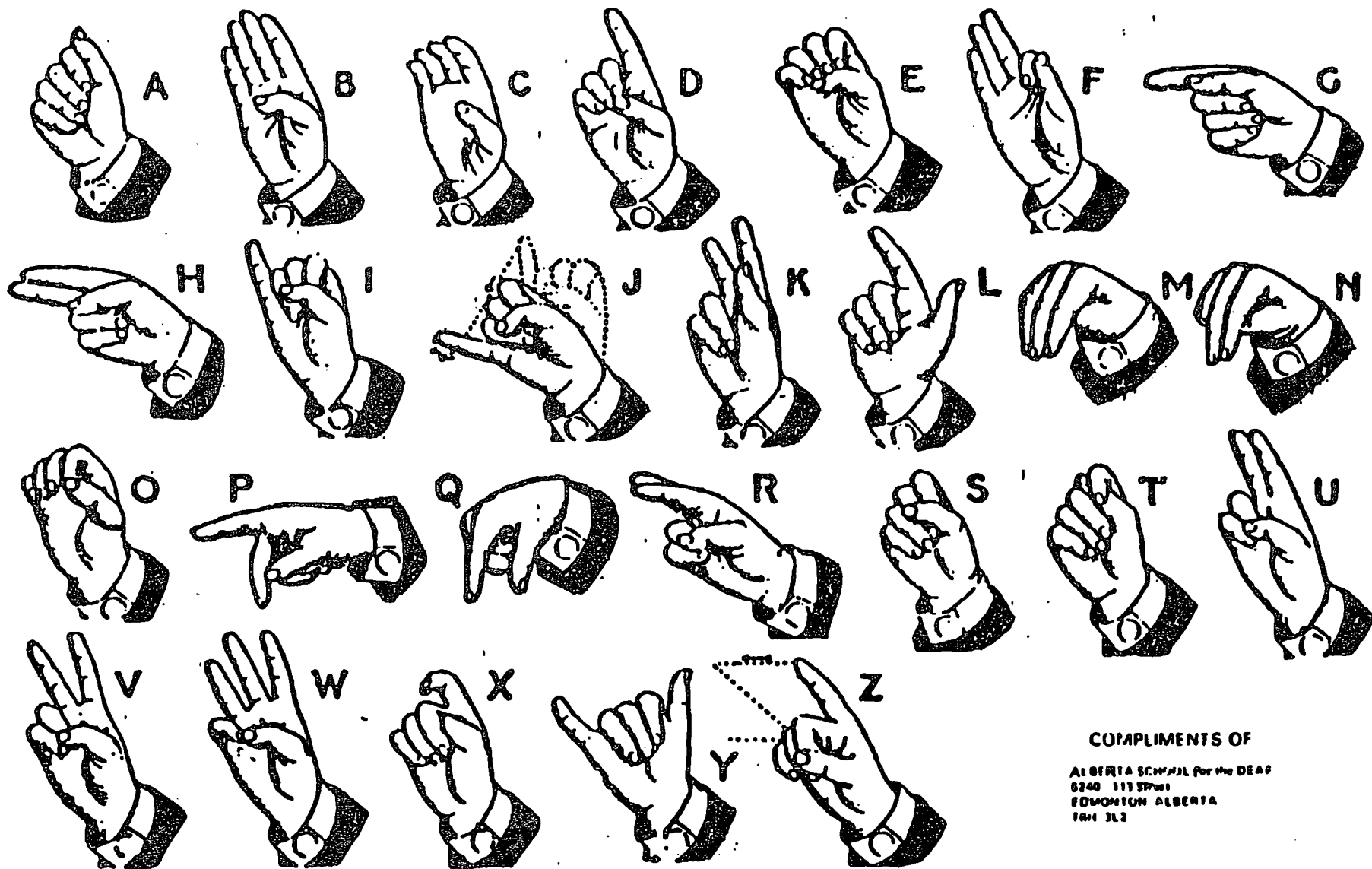
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